2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

contributions would be used for the general needs of the church. The festa committee was dismissed.

The following year he ran the festa himself. It was quite a success, although there was some grumbling that there was not the same spirit in the festa as before. But following the festa the year after that, the grumblers became more vocal and began to take action. Their main criticism was that without the committee to whip up enthusiasm for the festa, the village was becoming apathetic about its celebration. Moreover, with no committee there was no one to paint and care for the festa furnishings – which they considered to be the finest in Malta, if not the world – and they would soon be spoiled. Consequently, a few days after the festa, the ringleaders gathered in the football club and formed a committee with Sur Gorg, the president of the Social Club, as chairman. Sur Gorg,[1] a wealthy middle-aged bachelor, is the last descendant in the village of a family which has played a leading role in the community for almost a century. The committee was composed of members of the band club, the social club and the football club. Representatives then went to Dun Bert and told him that many people wished to have the old festa committee restored, with the power of raising funds. They also suggested that this committee should control the collection of threepence a week. Dun Bert replied that while he was not opposed in principle to the idea of such a committee, he would have to consider it. In any event, he could not approve of their financial proposals. When the spokesman told him that a committee was already in existence and working for the good of the village, he became somewhat alarmed. The following Sunday he defended his position before the village from the altar, citing relevant portions of Canon Law and describing the parish's financial situation.

Sur Gorg's group then distributed leaflets to each house asking for a vote of confidence. This divided the village into two factions, for there were many who would not consider going against the wishes of their spiritual shepherd, no matter what their views on the festa were. Dun Bert eventually agreed to the formation of a parish council, to comprise two representatives from

[1] The title *sur* (from *sinjur*, sir, gentleman) is a mark of respect bestowed by villagers upon all educated outsiders who have no other title. It also marks social distance. Very few persons are addressed this way by their fellow villagers. Sur Gorg, though born in Xorlin, was addressed this way because of his high social status and university education.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

787 585 533 in a rage, and he could not be persuaded to go back to his wedding before the organist could be found and the organ played for the occasion.

PAYING VISITS

273 594 576 825 If a person goes to pay a visit, for the first time, to a party and is not treated with a sort of drink called *zambur* — made of aniseed—a mouse enters the chest of drawers and gnaws all the petticoats of the mistress of the house.

SENDING TO THE OVEN

252 562 Some people think it a great shame for a woman who sends dishes to be cooked in an oven when her husband is away from the Island.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

197 seeing that they had no means of checking the facts for
648 themselves—what they wanted them to swallow. Even in the eighteenth century, as we shall see in Chapter XIII, an Italian visitor to Malta described the language of the Maltese as "their own perfidious idiom."

A case in point is the episode, recounted to the writer by one of His Majesty's Ambassadors to the Quirinal during the Fascist régime, concerning a Maltese football team on a visit to Italy. On their arrival in Rome the Maltese were met by the Italian team detailed to look after them, who had been well briefed to treat their visitors as 'unredeemed' blood-brothers. The Italians, knowing no reason to doubt the accuracy of their brief, greeted the Maltese footballers at the station in all good faith with a cordial address in eloquent Italian, of which their guests understood barely a word. Realizing, however, that they in their turn would be expected to say something, they replied with an equally friendly speech in Maltese, whereupon their hosts threw up their hands in mystified despair, crying, "*Ma che fratelli son' questi*—but what sort of brothers are these?"

A pleasant French contribution to Maltese is a word for
197 a train, *xmundifer* (*chemin de fer*), thought to have been
192 introduced by Maltese emigrants returning from Algeria and Tunis. And, as has been said above, English words, too, have found their way into Malta's eclectic vocabulary, words for the most part of a technical kind or related to sport. Among these is the verb "to score" which, as Professor J. Aquilina has pointed out, is conjugated as *niskorja*, I score, *skorja*, *skorjat*, *skorjajna*, *skorjaw*—he, she, we, they have scored a goal, and so on.

But it is interesting to note that we appear to be witnessing
• [596] the beginnings of a two-way traffic in this connexion. The common Maltese form of greeting and farewell is *sahha*, literally "health," a word that springs easily and comfortably also to the lips of non-Maltese who have spent any time in the islands. Thanks, no doubt, to the habitual use of this